Why Take a Survey?
What Participants Tell Us

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Aim and relevance

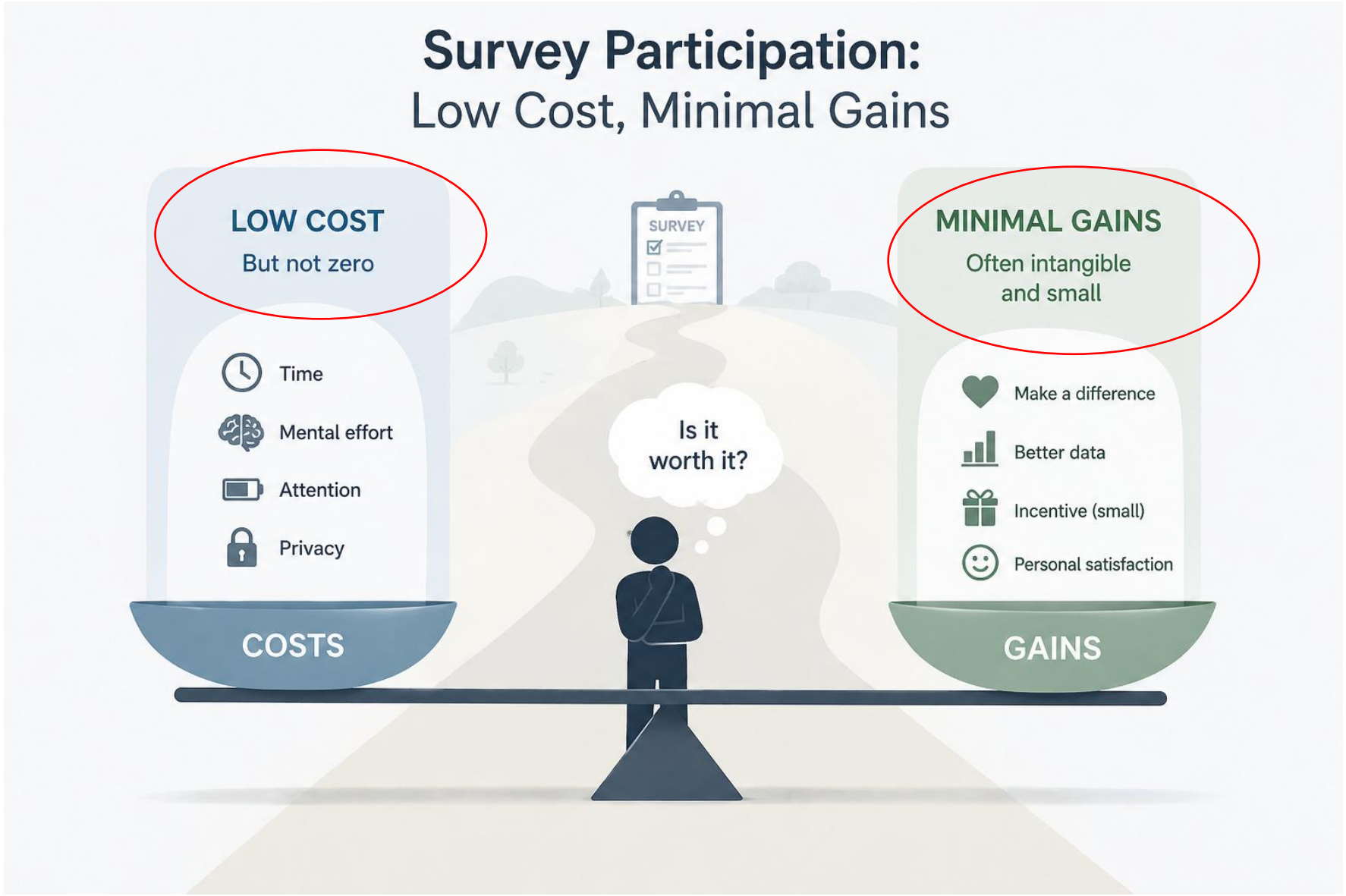
- Declining response rates
  - Potentially more bias, lower trust
- Increasing costs

- Many studies on correlates of response, but we need more insights on…

  … the motivations of people to participate and to not participate in surveys

  … motivational differences between populations (e.g., general population vs. students) and samples (probability vs. nonprobability)

Survey Participation Situation



(Image generated with ChatGPT, 2026)

Motivations to participate in surveys

- Groves & Couper (1995)
  - Social environment
  - Individual
  - Survey design
  - Interviewer
- Types of motivations/criteria for survey participation based on Brüggen et al. (2014) and Keusch (2015)
  - Intrinsic motivations (e.g., interest in the research topic)
  - Extrinsic motivations (incentives, feeling obliged to take part)
  - Study design characteristics (perceived burden related to survey mode or duration)
  - Situational factors (affective state during the survey request)

Participation Motives across Population and Samples

- General population
  - Diverse set of motivations
- Students
  - Homogeneous subgroup
  - More experience with surveys (vs. general population)
  - Less time (vs. general population)
  - More online (vs. general population)
- Probability samples
  - Random selection
  - Low survey experience
- Nonprobability samples
  - Self-selection
  - Professional respondents

Research Questions

Are there motivational differences with respect to…

… populations and samples in *level* and *prioritization* of participation criteria? (RQ1)

… respondents and nonrespondents, and does this indicate *disengaged* subgroups? (RQ2)

… intend to participate in future waves and which criteria *predict* follow-up intent? (RQ3)

Measure: Surveys in General

V1: Ranking

Please select from the list the <u>three</u> criteria that are most important to you personally if you decide to participate in a survey or not.

*Please select a maximum of **three** answer options.*

- ☐ The purpose of the survey (e.g., science or market research)
- ☐ The topic of the survey
- ☐ The sponsor of the survey
- ☐ The way the survey is conducted (e.g., online, by phone)
- ☐ The time required to participate
- ☐ Compensation for participation
- ☐ The credible assurance of compliance with data security regulations
- ☐ The mood you are in at the time of contacting you

V2: Rating

How important are the following criteria for you when deciding whether or not to participate in a survey?

How about...	not important at all						Very important
... the purpose of the survey (e.g., science or market research)?	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
... the topic of the survey?	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
... the sponsor of the survey?	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
... the way in which the survey is conducted (e.g., online, by phone)?	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
... the time required to participate?	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
... compensation for participation?	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
... credible assurance of compliance with data security regulations?	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
... the mood you are in at the time of contacting you?	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

(Silber et al. 2023, Study 1 and 2)

Rating: Individual evaluation of each motive; complete picture

Ranking: Only relative evaluation; but closer to actual participation situation

Surveys in General (Rating) + Nonrespondents

Wie wichtig sind Ihnen die folgenden Punkte bei der Entscheidung, ob Sie an einer Befragung teilnehmen oder nicht? Bitte sagen Sie es mir anhand der Skala von 1 bis 7. Dabei bedeutet 1 „überhaupt nicht wichtig“ und 7 „sehr wichtig“.

☞ ***Nicht vorlesen:*** *Falls Befragter angibt, grundsätzlich nicht an Befragungen teilzunehmen, bitte unten ankreuzen: Ich nehme generell nicht an Befragungen teil.*

	Überhaupt nicht wichtig 1	2	3	4	5	6	Sehr wichtig 7	Keine Antwort
Wofür die Befragung gemacht wird (z.B. Wissenschaft oder Marktforschung)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Um welches Thema es geht	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Wer die Befragung in Auftrag gegeben hat (z.B. Firmen, Ministerien oder Hochschulen)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Wie die Befragung durchgeführt wird (z.B. online, telefonisch)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Wie lange die Teilnahme dauert	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Wie viel Geld es für die Teilnahme gibt	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Wie sehr ich darauf vertrauen kann, dass meine Daten geschützt sind	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Wie meine Stimmung zum Zeitpunkt der Kontaktaufnahme ist	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Ich nehme generell nicht an Befragungen teil.	☐							

Only Nonrespondents

(FReDA 2024, Silber et al. 2025a, Study 3)

Specific Survey (Ranking)

Please select three criteria from the list that were most important to you personally for your decision to take part in the "Contacts in times of crisis" survey.

(1) The purpose of the survey (e.g., science)
(2) The topic of the survey
(3) The sponsor of the survey
(4) The way in which the survey was conducted (video-based online interview)
(5) The time and effort associated with participation
(6) The compensation for participation
(7) The credible assurance of compliance with data protection regulations
(8) The mood you were in at the time you were contacted

(Silber et al. 2025b, Study 4)

Reasons for Interest
The gift card is worth it
The topic of the survey is interesting
The length of the survey is reasonable
The purpose of the study is important
The opportunity to help is rewarding
I trust that my data will be protected
The web survey mode is easy to use
The survey sponsor is trustworthy
Reasons for Disinterest
The gift card is not enough
The topic of the survey is uninteresting
The survey is too long
I don't think I have much to contribute to this research
The information collected is too personal or sensitive
I don't trust that my data will be protected
I don't like the web survey mode
The survey sponsor is not trustworthy

Follow-Up Survey (Ranking)

"Having completed this survey, how interested would you be in doing a follow-up survey next fall?"

(Silber et al. 2026, Study 5)

Study Overview

	Study 1	Study 2	Study 3	Study 4	Study 5
Sample	Probability	Non-Probability	Probability	Probability	Probability
Population	General Population	General Population	18-49 years	General Population	University Students
Region	Mannheim, Germany	Germany	Germany	Germany	U-M, Michigan, USA
Mode	Online, mail	Online	Online, mail, F2F	Live-Video Interview	Online
Incentive	0-1 EUR	1.5 EUR	5 EUR*	15-20 EUR	10-20 USD
Response Rate	24.3%	NA	31.6%	16.8%	38.1%
Sample Size	1,343	452	15,900; 471	161	3811
Year	2019-2020	2021	2024	2023	2025

RQ1: Probability vs. Non-Probability

Probability vs. Non-Probability (Study 1 and 2)

Professional respondents



Non-professional respondents



- Ranking reflects mean proportions of “mentioned”
- Rating reflects the mean on a seven-point scale from “not important at all” to “very important,” rescaled to 0-1

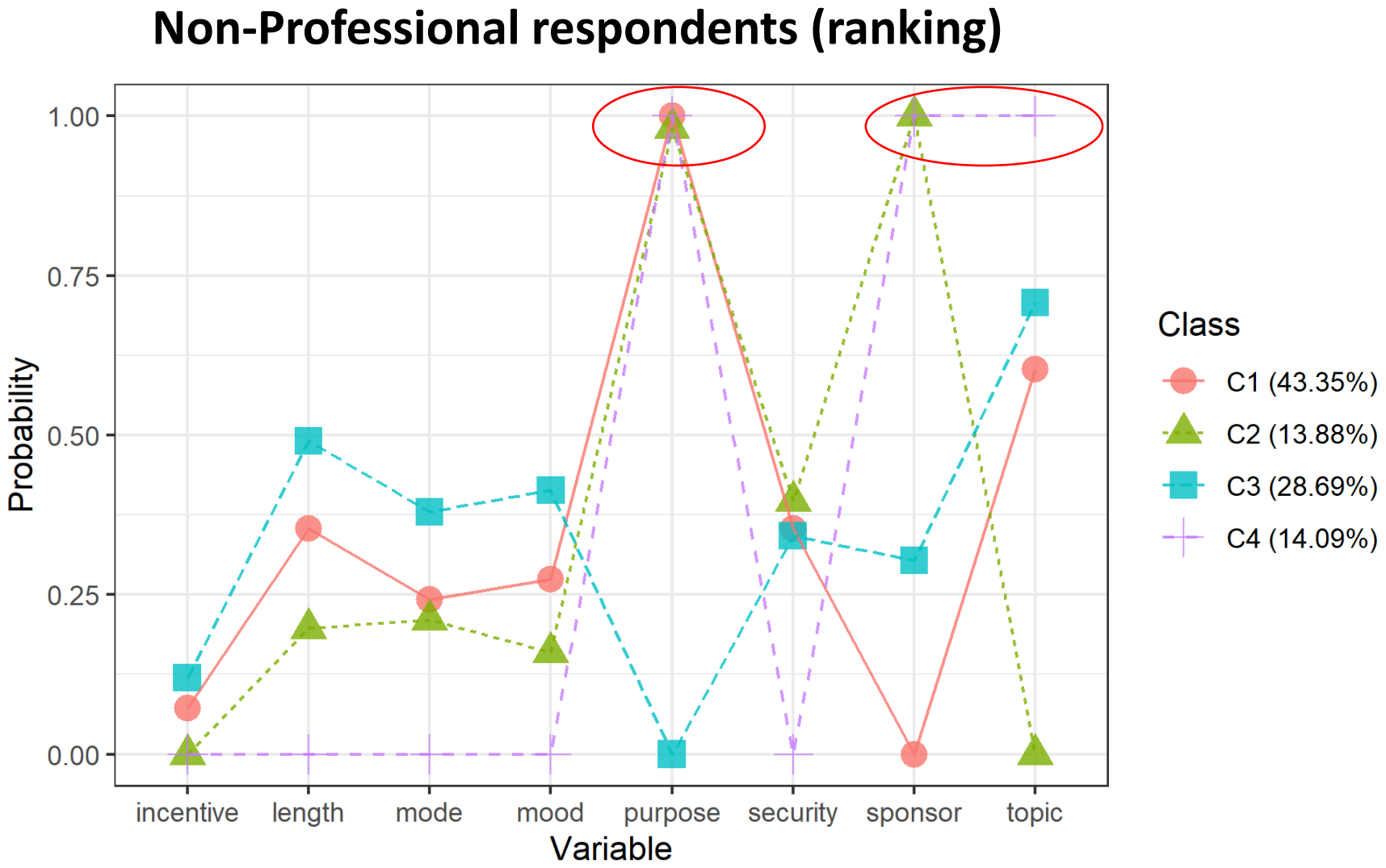
Correlation (rating):
r = -.04
Correlation (ranking):
r = .08

Mean differences between non-professional and professional respondents for ranking and rating (Study 1 and 2)



Correlation (rating and ranking):
r = .93

Latent Class Analysis (Study 1)



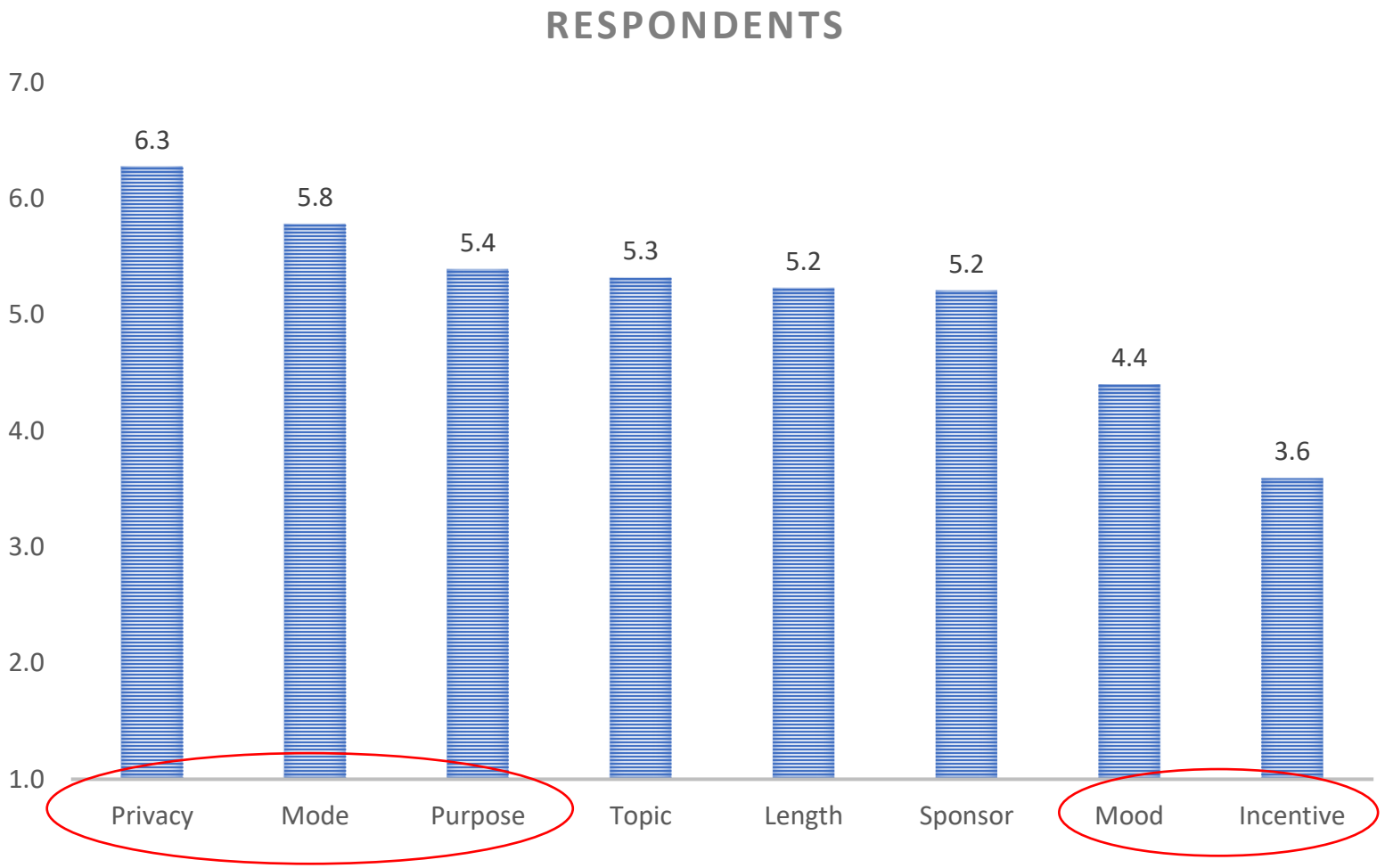
Latent Class Analysis (Study 2)



Study Overview

	Study 1	Study 2	Study 3	Study 4	Study 5
Sample	Probability	Non-Probability	Probability	Probability	Probability
Population	General Population	General Population	18-49 years	General Population	University Students
Highest rating	Privacy Purpose Topic	Privacy Method Topic	Privacy Method Purpose	NA	NA
Lowest rating	Mood Incentive	Mood Sponsor	Mood Incentive	NA	NA
Highest ranking	Purpose Topic Sponsor	Topic Incentive Length	NA	Purpose Topic Incentive	Incentive Topic Length
Lowest ranking	Method Incentive	Mood Sponsor	NA	Length Method	Method Privacy
Extrinsic vs. Intrinsic	Intrinsic	Intrinsic and Extrinsic	Intrinsic	Intrinsic and Extrinsic	Extrinsic (and Intrinsic)
Incentive	0-1 EUR	1.5 EUR	5 EUR*	15-20 EUR	10-20 USD

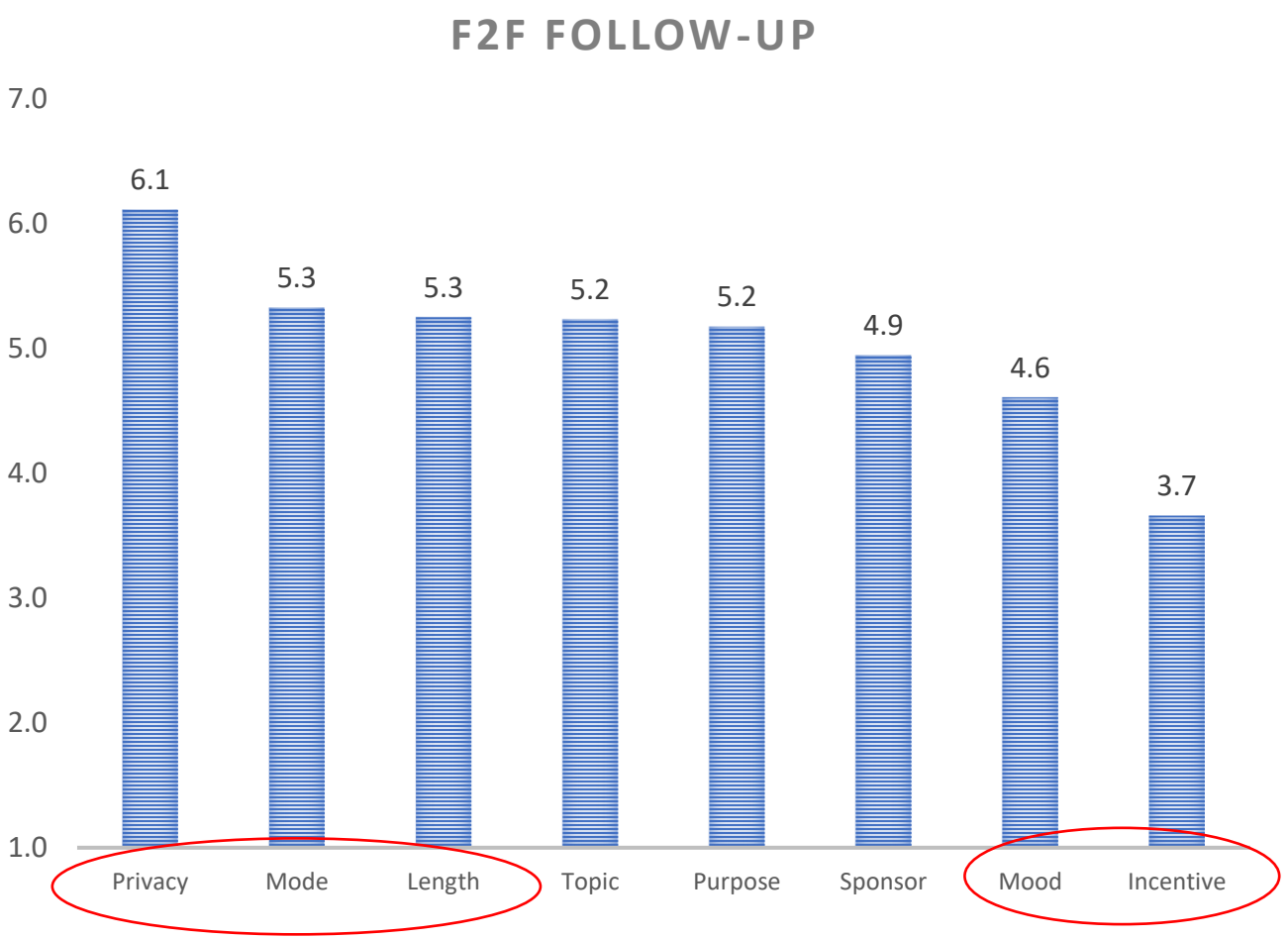
RQ2: Respondents vs. Nonrespondents



Highest:
- Privacy
- Mode
- Purpose

Lowest:
- Mood
- Incentive

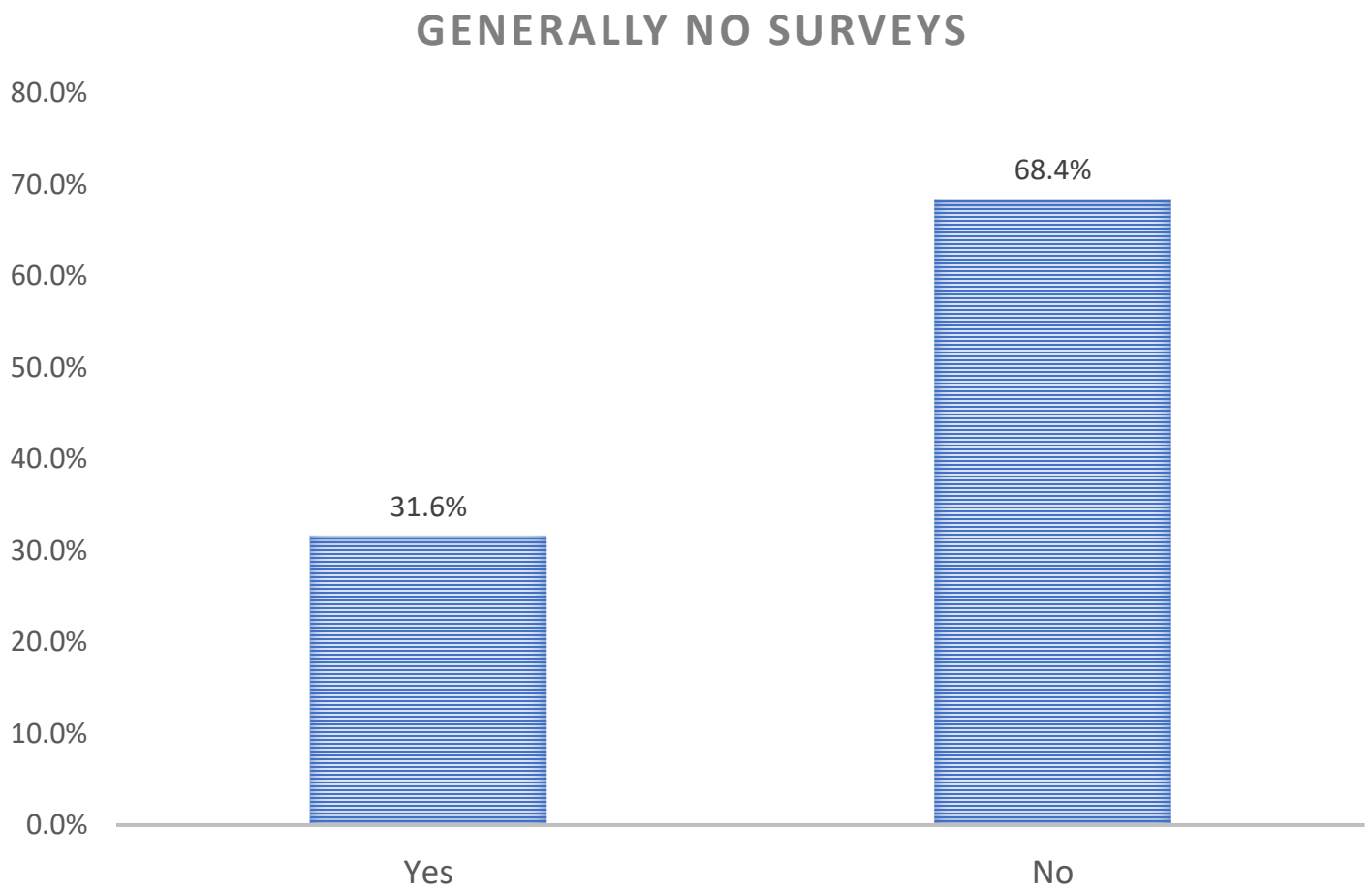
Study 3 (rating)



Highest:
- Privacy
- Mode
- Length

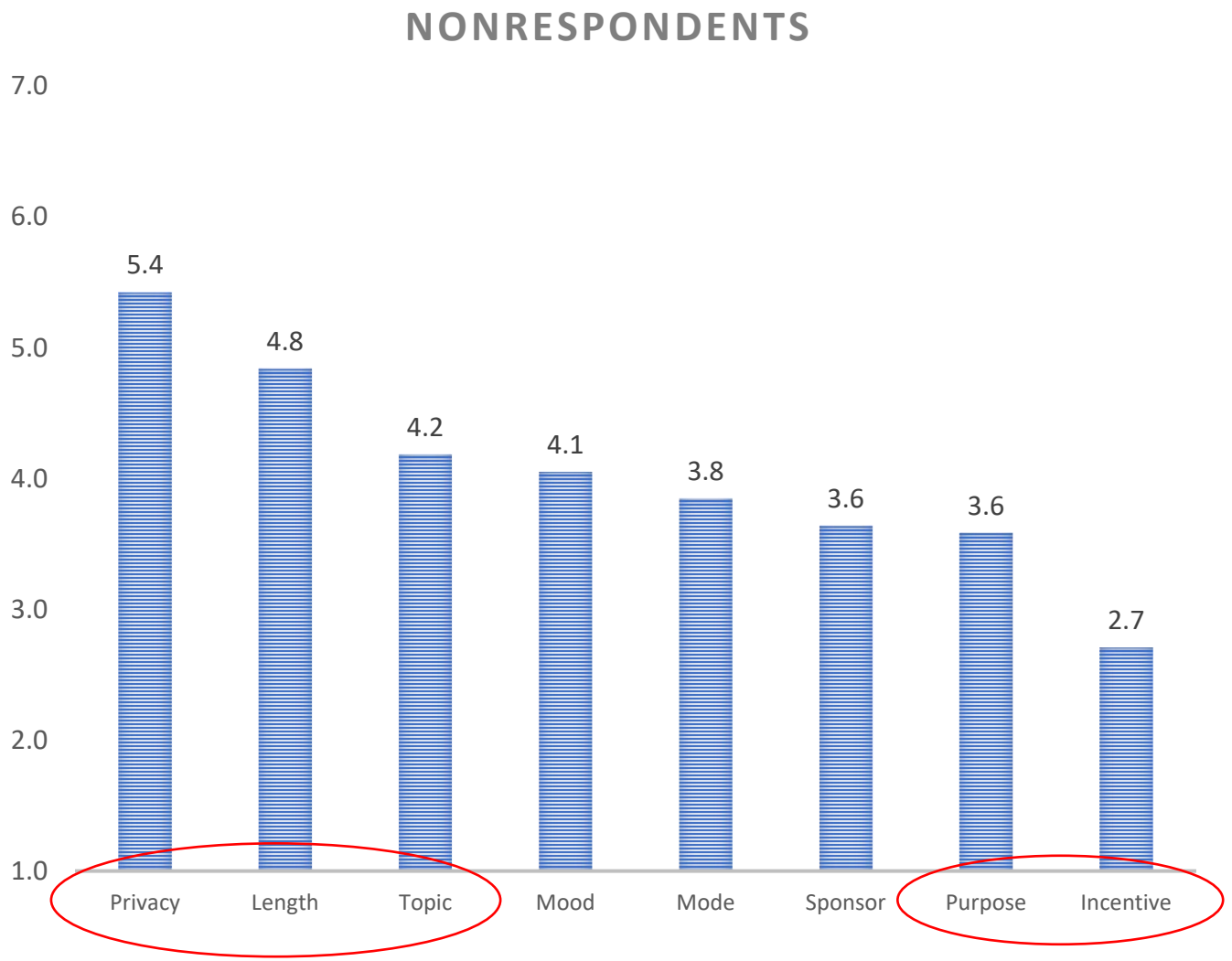
Lowest:
- Mood
- Incentive

Study 3 (rating)



A sizable subgroup consistently refuses surveys (structural nonparticipation).

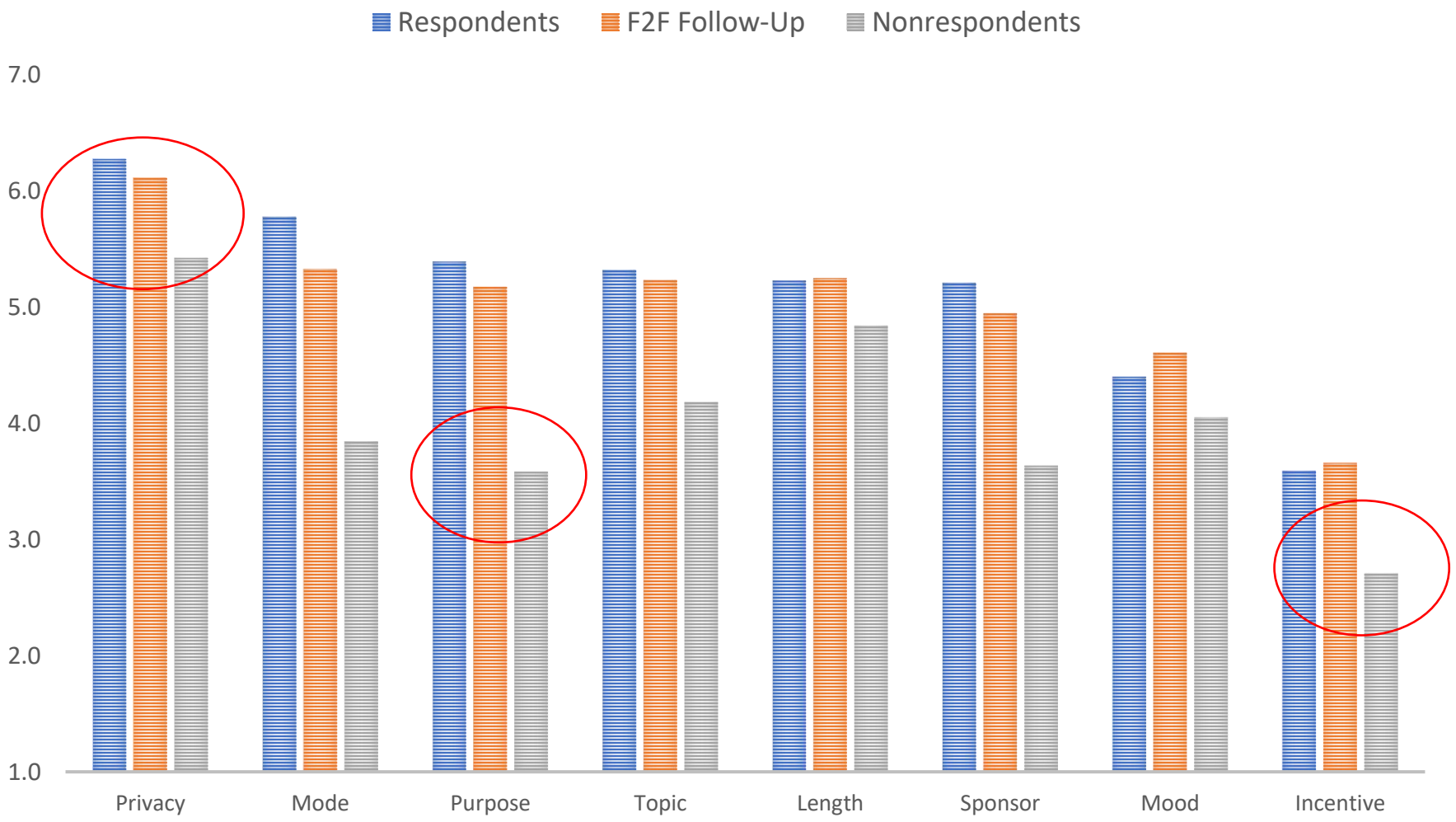
Study 3 (rating)



Highest:
- Privacy
- Length
- Topic

Lowest:
- Purpose
- Incentive

Study 3 (rating)



Study 3 (rating)

Highest and Lowest Ratings

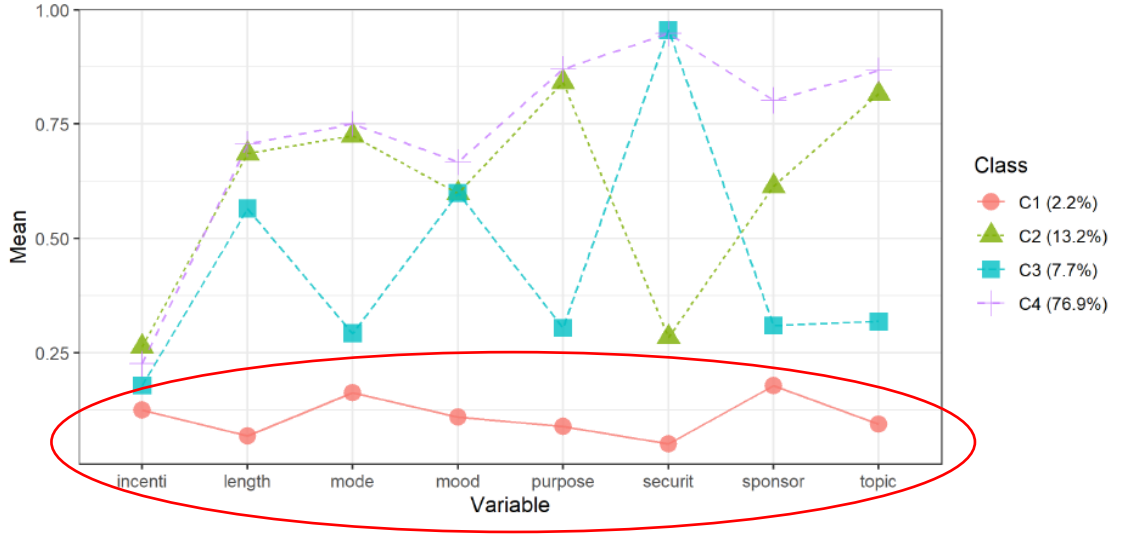
	Respondents	F2F Follow-Up	Nonrespondents
Highest rating	Privacy	Privacy	Privacy
	Mode	Mode	Length
	Purpose	Length	Topic
Lowest rating	Mood	Mood	Purpose
	Incentive	Incentive	Incentive

Study 3 (rating)

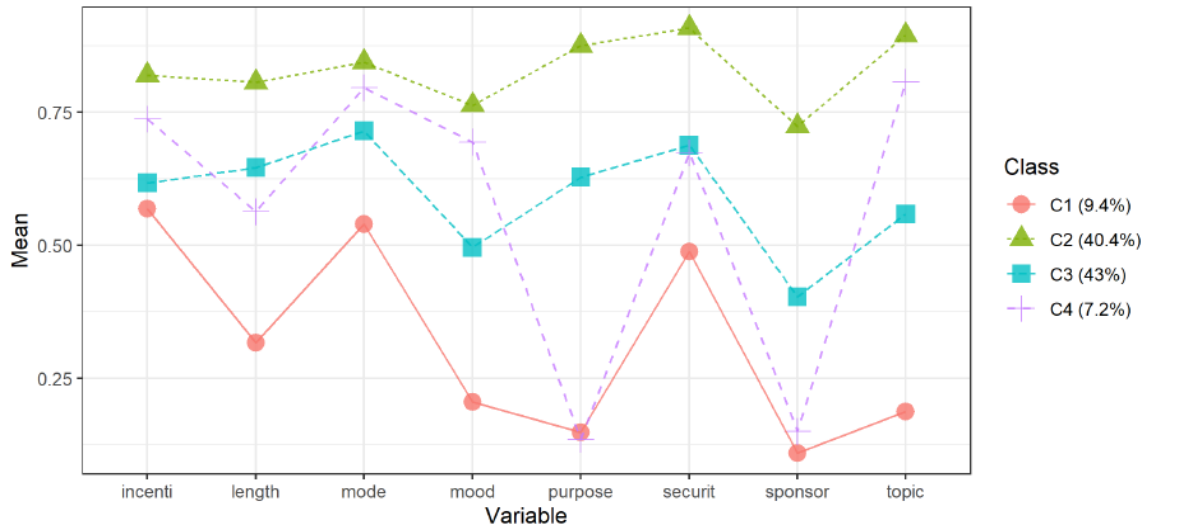
Low Motivation Group

LCA Study 1 and 2 (Rating)

A. Four class solution for non-professional sample answering using the rating response scale

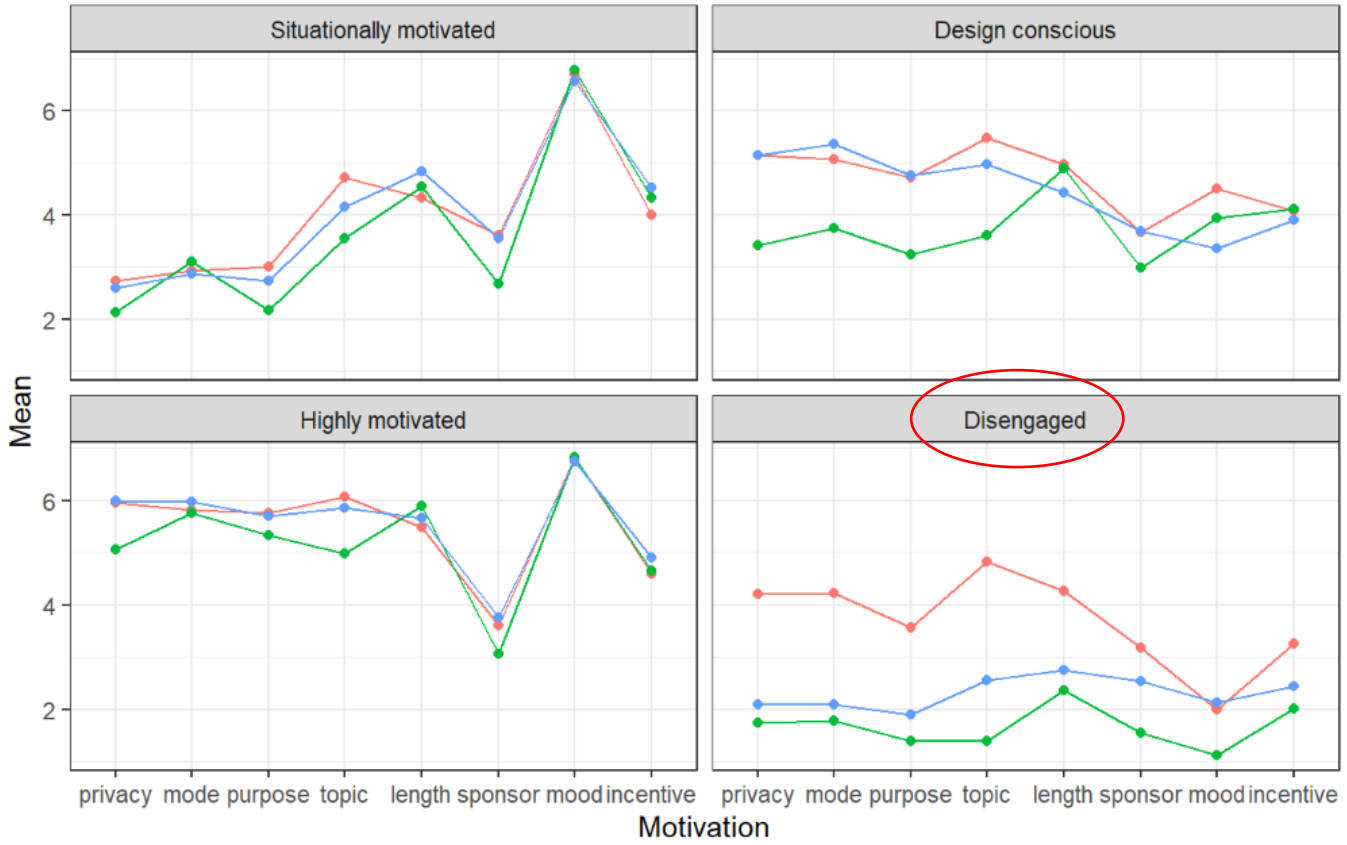


B. Four class solution for professional sample answering using the rating response scale



Low motivation group among non-professional respondents (2.2%)

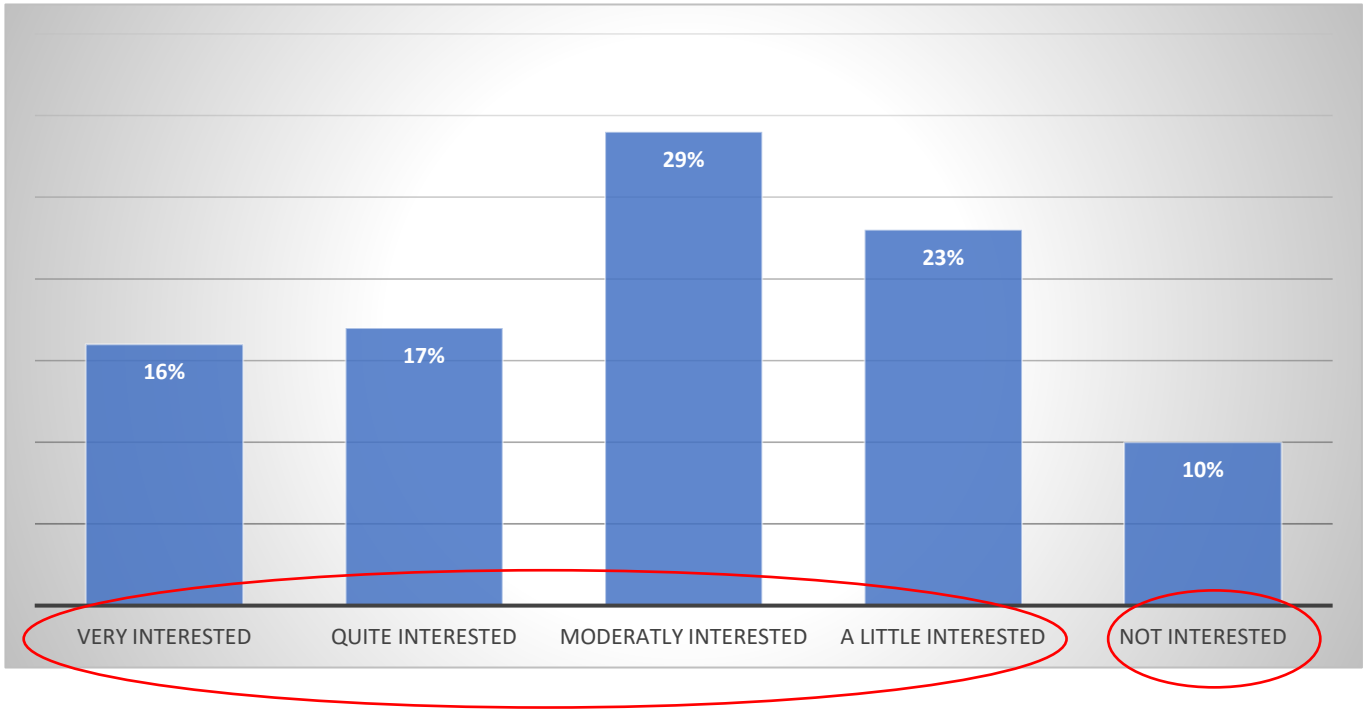
LCA Results (Study 3, rating)



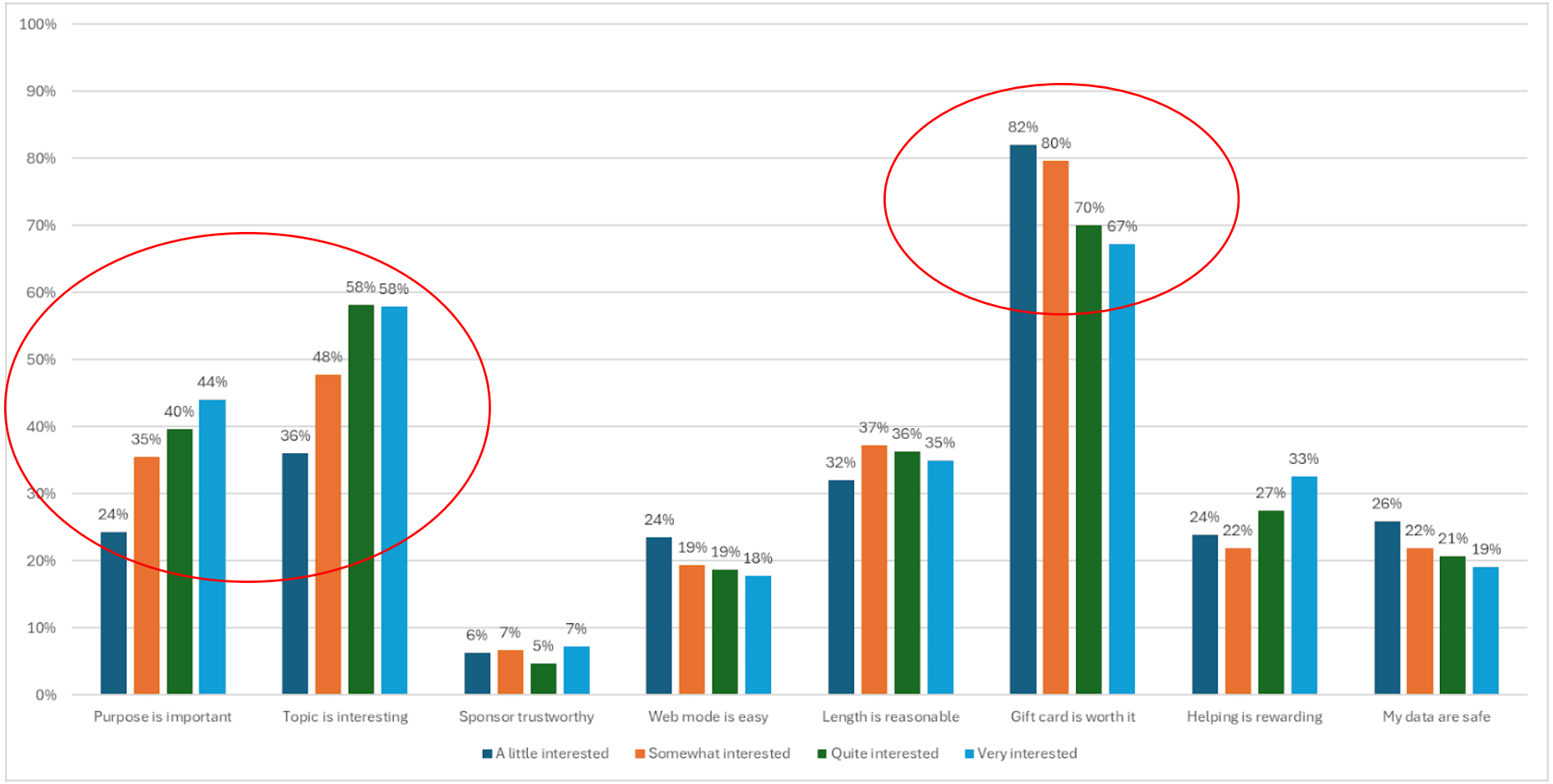
group	Situationally motivated	Design conscious	Highly motivated	Disengaged
Respondents	11.5	12.8	70.6	5.1
Nonrespondents	22.7	15.5	44.9	16.9
F2F Follow-up	15.8	11.5	67.7	4.9

RQ3: Intention to Participate in the 2nd Wave

Having completed this survey, how interested would you be in doing a follow-up survey next fall?

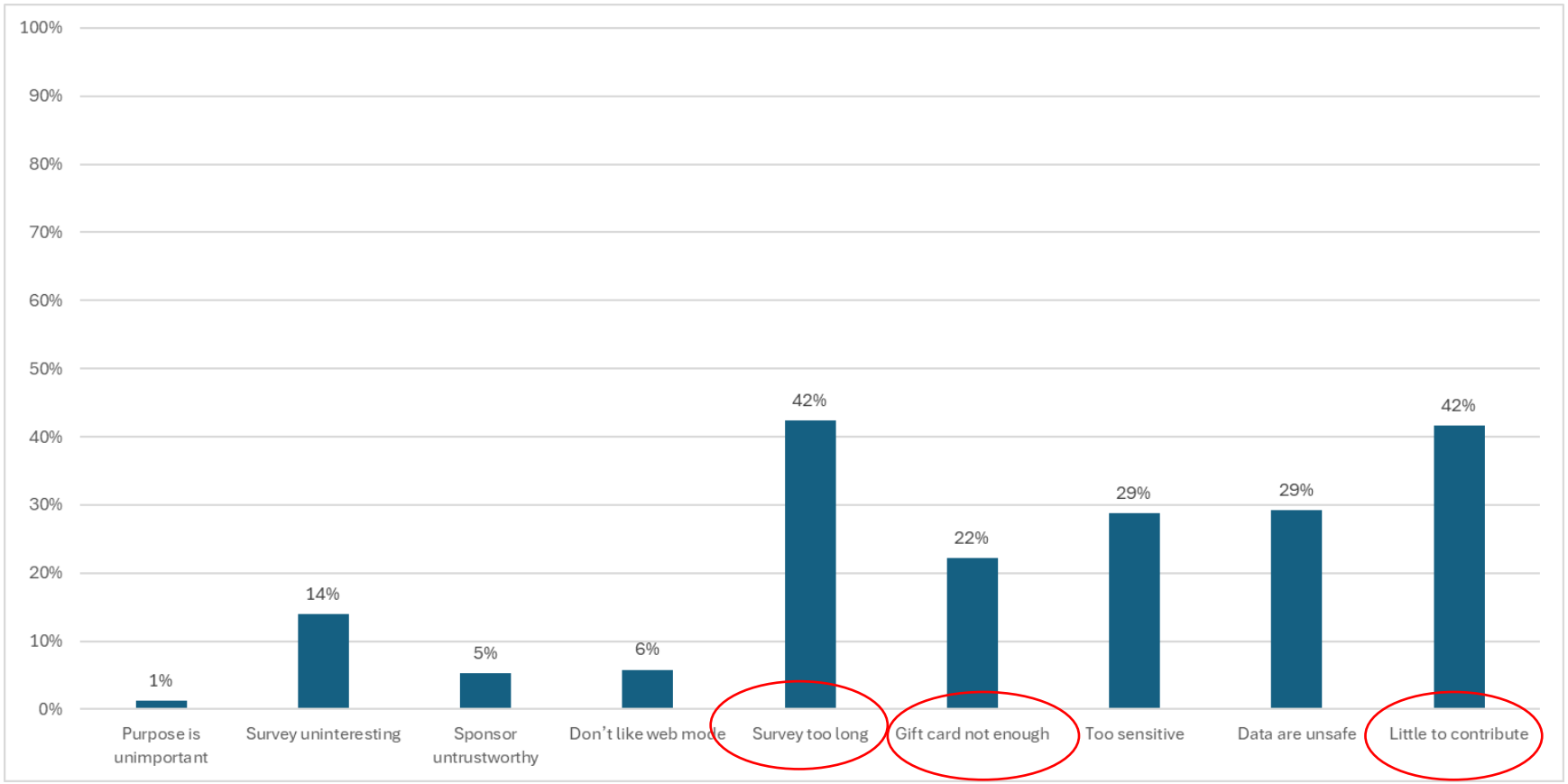


Study 5


100%
90%
80%
70%
60%
50%
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%
24%
35%
40%
44%
36%
48%
58%
58%
6%
7%
5%
7%
24%
19%
19%
18%
32%
37%
36%
35%
82%
80%
70%
67%
24%
22%
27%
33%
26%
22%
21%
19%
Purpose is important
Topic is interesting
Sponsor trustworthy
Web mode is easy
Length is reasonable
Gift card is worth it
Helping is rewarding
My data are safe
A little interested
Somewhat interested
Quite interested
Very interested

Study 5

Not interested



Not interested is not just 'incentive too low'; 'little to contribute' and 'too long' dominate.

Study 5

Predicting Intention to Participate (OLS)

Predictors		beta	sig.
Motivation	Purpose	.25	<.001
	Topic	.30	<.001
	Sponsor	.10	<.001
	Mode	.11	<.001
	Length	.19	<.001
	Incentive	.20	<.001
	Help	.20	<.001
	Security	.13	<.001
Background	Agnostic	.06	<.01
	Religous	.08	<.001
	Political leaning	.10	<.001
	N	3252	
	R^2	.284	

Study 5

Summary of Results (1)

- Rating & ranking tell different stories:
  - Ratings identify groups for which ‘everything matters’ vs. ‘nothing matters’
  - Ranking indicates ‘what matters most’
  - Structurally similar results (prob vs. nonprob)
- Privacy often highly rated, but not considered a main motive for participation decision
- Different motivation groups exist:
  - Mainly intrinsic (random sample: low incentive)
  - Both intrinsic and extrinsic (nonprob panel: low incentive, random sample: high incentive)
  - Mainly extrinsic (students: high incentive)

Summary of Results (2)

RQ1: Populations and samples

- Mix of intrinsic and extrinsic motivations
  - Mannheim study, family survey (intrinsic)
  - Nonprob sample, video interview (intrinsic and extrinsic)
  - U-M students (extrinsic)

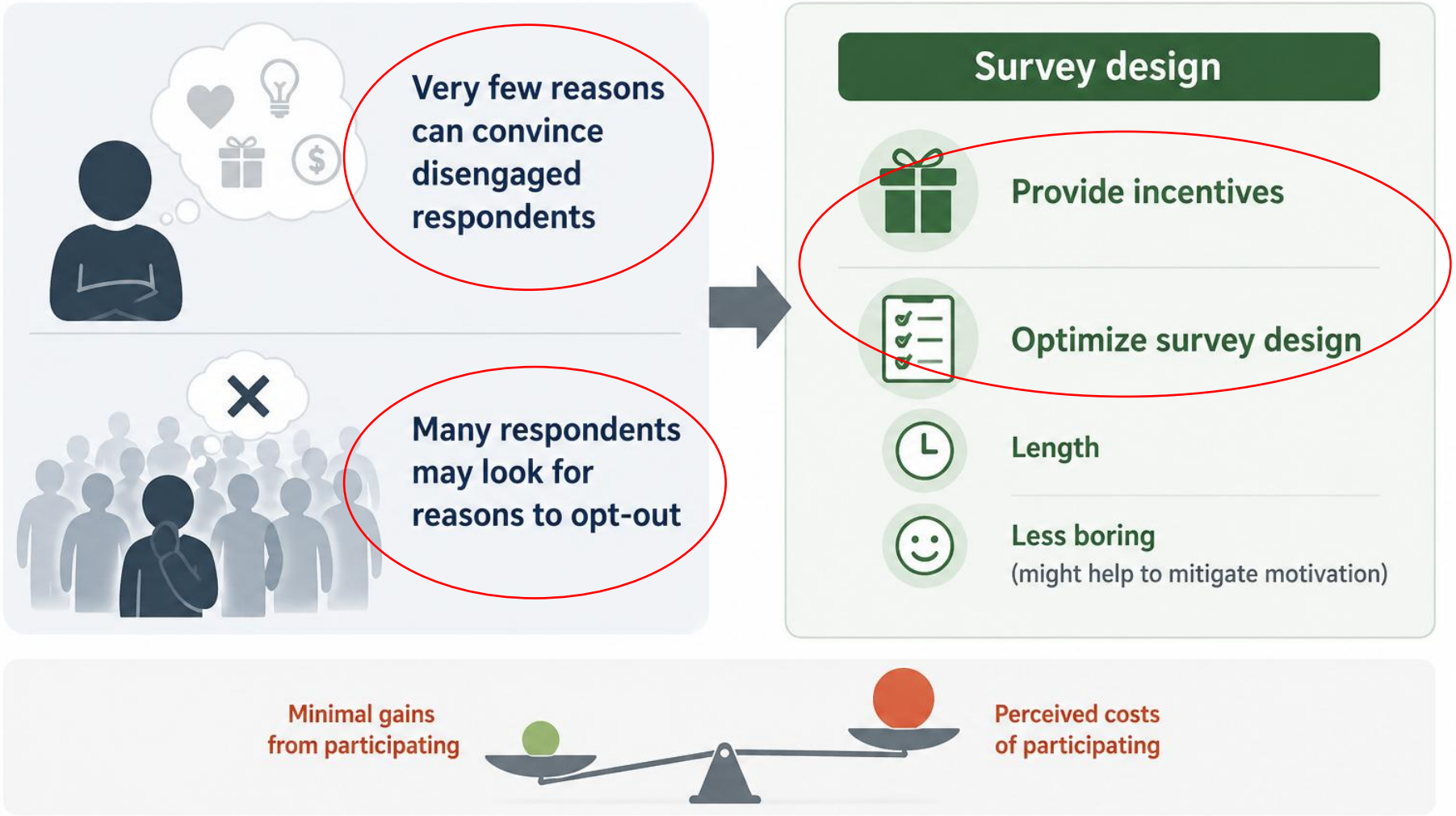
RQ2: Nonresponse follow-up

- Showed disengaged groups
  - 32% of nonrespondents do not participate in surveys
  - 17% rated all motives low (12% of all nonrespondents)
  - Purpose and incentive rated very low

RQ3: Intend to participate in future waves

- High likelihood: Many reasons rated important and several selected
- Low likelihood: Most reasons rated low and fewer selected
- Motives are independently predictive (topic/purpose strongest)

Minimal Gain Situation



(Image generated with ChatGPT, 2026)

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References

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